



U.S. Department of Justice

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PRESS RELEASE

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Pickpocket Pleads Guilty to Robbery, Theft **- Distracted Victims at Bus and Metro Stops, Then Stole Their Wallets -**

WASHINGTON - Alexander Barnwell, 55, of Washington, D.C., pled guilty today to charges of robbery and first degree theft in a pair of incidents that targeted bus and Metro passengers, U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. announced.

Barnwell pled guilty in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia before the Honorable Michael Ryan. He is to be sentenced on May 23, 2011. The robbery charge carries up to 15 years in prison and the theft charge has a maximum penalty of 10 years of incarceration.

Barnwell was arrested after an investigation by the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and Metro Transit Police into a series of pickpocketing incidents that took place in recent years in and around Metro stations and bus stops, including crimes at or near the Farragut North Metro station, Union Station, and the bus loading area in the 1000 block of New York Avenue NW.

As part of his plea agreement, Barnwell admitted to two incidents. In the most recent case, he admitted that on January 14, 2011, at approximately 12 p.m., he and an accomplice pretended to accidentally bump into a young woman who was attempting to board a charter bus in the 1000 block of New York Avenue NW, throwing her off balance. While the woman was distracted, one of the men reached into her bag and stole her wallet. Within an hour, the victim's credit card was used to purchase men's apparel and other items at a department store in Arlington, Va.

Barnwell also admitted that on August 18, 2009, at approximately 5 p.m., he and an accomplice pretended to accidentally bump into a 90-year-old man who was entering the Farragut North Metro station. The victim, who uses a cane, realized after the encounter that his wallet had been stolen from his back pocket. Within 30 minutes of the incident, Barnwell used the victim's credit card to purchase \$1,000 worth of gift cards from a department store.

In announcing the plea, U.S. Attorney Machen commended MPD First District Detectives Thomas Smith, Dennis Myles, Gary Johnson, Andre Williams, and Raymond Stargel, and MPD Officers Louis Schnider, Katrina Harrison, and Brett Bartholomew. U.S. Attorney Machen also praised the hard work and dedication of Sergeant Vernon Clayton and Officer Bullock of the Metro Transit Police. Finally, U.S. Attorney Machen recognized the work of Paralegal Tameka Garcia, and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Josh Klein and Lara Worm, who investigated and prosecuted the case.

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